

Roommates

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Summary:

Richie and Eddie needed a place to live, so why not move in with Bill and his boyfriend Stan?

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

They're all young adults. Nothing explicit but definitely implied. I doubt Bill would still have his stutter, but I wanted to put it anyway. AU where the events with Pennywise never happened, but Georgie did go missing.

I proofread and edited it a couple of times, but apologize in advance if I missed any mistakes.

Richie and Bill have been friends for a coon's age and planned to be for the rest of their lives. Once they graduated high school, Bill and Richie had purposely applied for the same university just so that they could stay together. They shared a dorm first semester. Bill also met Stan that first semester.

Richie was up in arms when Bill and Stan began dating. They were college freshman after all and shouldn't be wasting their time on *one* person. Richie never outright fought tooth and nail to break them up, that just wasn't his style. He did, however, make the occasional snide remark trying to deter Bill from anything serious. Everything fell to deaf ears.

Second semester there was a mix up in the Residential office that resulted in Bill and Richie not sharing a dorm. They ended up individually having to find something off campus.

Second semester was when Richie also met Eddie. He learned to eat his words about wasting your time on one person.

"O..our roommate is m..muh..moving out at the e..end of the month," Bill had told Richie over lunch one afternoon between classes. "W..why don't yu..you guys just move i..in..in with us?"

"What, are you serious? For real, Bill? That would be fucking awesome," Richie said.

A week or so ago, Eddie and Richie's landlord had informed them

that they were not going to be able to renew their nearly complete lease. Eddie claimed it had to do with an incident between their landlord and Richie a week prior. Richie was very adamant on denying such an absurd claim. There wasn't any changing their mind, though, and Richie and Eddie were faced with needing to find a new place to live.

"Y..yeah. We're going to nu..need to find someone to fill th..th..the room anyway," Bill said. "Stan and I already kn..know you guys a..and if it's both of you then it would be ch..chu..cheaper. Th..the rooms pretty b..big."

"Meh we don't need much space even if it wasn't. That's perfect. Yeah, I'll tell Eddie about it tonight. He's been stressing out over finding somewhere, pretty sure he's going to have a fucking aneurysm," Richie told Bill, rolling his eyes picking up his trash to toss on his way out. "Anyway, Big Bill, gotta get to class. I'll let you know what Eds says."

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Stan proved not to be much help in the moving in process. Bill, Richie, and Eddie had spent an afternoon going back and forth from Eddie's car to unload boxes, then back to the old apartment to fill it up with even more boxes, just to go back to unload those boxes as well. The most movement Stan had done in the process was from reading on the couch, then the kitchen table, before finally settling in his and Bill's room to finish reading there.

It had annoyed Richie and Eddie a bit that he didn't lend a hand, but neither of them said anything. It wasn't really Stan's responsibility. Bill was, after all, only helping out since that tended to be the kind of guy he was. Stan was not that kind of guy.

After a long day of moving and having had unpacked the essentials, everyone had gone to bed. When Eddie got up later that night to take a leak, he saw the light in the kitchen was on. When he went to turn it off, he saw Stan was there meticulously organizing Richie and Eddie's kitchen things among his and Bill's.

Stan hadn't noticed Eddie was there, so Eddie was quiet when going

back to his new room. It wasn't the heavy lifting that Eddie would have liked earlier, but it was one less thing he was going to have to do and for that, Eddie appreciated it.

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Eddie was both annoyed and relieved that Richie had someone to play Street Fighter with. Relieved because it meant that he got out of having to, but annoyed because when Richie *really* got into Street Fighter, it was just about all he paid attention to. Having Bill as an almost constant worthy opponent just meant Richie was getting into it much more often than usual. Honestly, Eddie wondered how his boyfriend got anything done.

This evening was one of those evenings when Richie and Bill had their asses firmly planted on the couch and their eyes glued to the television with controllers in their hands. Eddie was sitting on the floor between Richie's legs with his head down as he worked through some equations for this chemistry class.

Stan wasn't home, but he was supposed to be soon enough.

Eddie was slowly beginning to catch onto his new roommate's schedules. Stan had classes Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday and worked evening Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday. Bill's schedule mirrored Stan's with the exception of his work schedule as Bill only worked weekends. Despite literally dating Richie, Eddie never knew what his week looked like since his boyfriend had a tendency to spontaneously do something different everyday.

Like clockwork, Stan came through the front door and dropped his bag beside it. He looked around their little living room before looking at the television. Street Fighter again.

Going to the couch, Stan leaned against the arm rest beside Bill and let his body sink down into the crevice between it and Bill's body. Bill shifted a bit to accommodate his boyfriend's mass, though his eyes didn't move from the television.

"I want to die," Stan grumbled, resting his head on Bill's shoulder as he watched the fight go down on the television.

“Th..that bad?” Bill asked him, leaning his head against Stan’s.

“That bad,” Stan said. “I’m going to quit. I swear I’m going to quit.”

Bill cracked a smile. “Yu..you’ve been saying th..that for months.”

“Booyah!” Richie said once his avatar defeated Bill’s. He stood up in triumph, dropping his controller and hitting Eddie in the head with it.

“Watch it, Fuckface,” Eddie said, ducking down as the controller landed against his head. Bill laughed, an arm snaking around Stan’s waist and pulling him into a tight side hug. Stan couldn’t help but smile at the foolishness of his new, much louder, roommates.

“Sorry, babe, forgot you were down there,” Richie said, cracking a grin at him.

“Yeah, that’s not what you were saying last night, asshole,” Eddie grumbled, looking back down at his assignment. Bill laughed again, Stan just rolled his eyes.

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Richie was never quiet. Never.

That was a law of nature that didn’t stop in the bedroom. Bill knew his depravity had no bounds, but he couldn’t help but hope that perhaps, just maybe, for the sake of him and Stan, Richie would be able to change his ways at least some of the time.

“If you don’t go and tell them to shut up, there is going to be hell to pay,” Stan said. It was nearly two in the morning and everyone had class in a couple of hours. That didn’t seem to deter Eddie and Richie, however.

“M..me? Why don’t you do it?” Bill said. There was no way in hell he was going to get up and tell his roommates to quiet down. “W..what they d..do bu..behind closed door doesn’t h..have anything to do with us.”

“Yeah, but it does when its been going on for hours and I’m trying to

sleep,” Stan said. “Go tell them to shut the fuck up. You know I have a midterm in the morning.”

Bill made a face but didn’t say anything.

Stan groaned in frustration before rolling out of bed. A few moments later Bill could hear the sharp banging of Stan’s fist against Eddie and Richie’s door. “Respect your neighbors, assholes,” Stan’s irritated voice demanded.

Almost instantly it was silent.

“I told you to keep your fucking voice down,” Bill could hear Eddie scold through the wall.

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Bill never went home for Christmas. The household was always tense, and now that he was his parents only child Christmas was never the same. The magic had disappeared years ago. And so, when the semester ended and Eddie (who absolutely could not miss Christmas with his mother) had gone home, and Stan (who had left even before for the his family's Hanukkah festivities), it was just him and Richie at the apartment.

Richie had stopped spending Christmas with his folks ever since he had moved out. He had always just said it was because the trip back to Derry was a long and an expensive one. It just made sense to stay in their little college town, but Bill had always known better.

Richie’s mom was an alcoholic. Something Richie didn’t have to tell Bill about, but the years of growing up alongside each other as children informed Bill instead once he was old enough to understand what addiction was. Moving away was Richie’s out from a mother who was never sober and a father who didn’t acknowledge him.

And so, spending Christmas together had become a new tradition for the last two, and now three, holidays.

“Ho ho ho,” Richie said cheerfully when he stepped into the apartment. Fresh flakes of snow dropped off his coat to melt down at his feet. It was okay, though. Stan wasn’t home to lecture him about

making the carpet wet.

Richie held up the brown bag in his hand to present Bill with the beers he had made a special trip to go and get.

“Aw..awesome, I’ve j..ju..just about got the VCR s..set up,” Bill told him. Even after all of these years, He-Man was still their go to cartoon. Now that they were older, the storyline was far too juvenile for them both, but it was the nostalgia that always had them going back. Memories of staying up late during sleepovers always flooded back. It was just kind of their thing. The beers were new though.

Once the show started rolling, they sprawled out on the couch, pizza between them as they watched the colorful cartoon play on the screen.

“Hey, Bill,” Richie at some point.

“Hmm,” Bill asked mid drink. An eyebrow raised as he glanced over at his best friend.

“This was a good idea,” Richie said. “Moving in together, I mean. It’s fun, ya know.”

“Yu..yeah. I get it, Ru..Richie,” Bill said, smiling. “I’m glad you gu..guys moved in too. Su..Stan likes having you guys uh..uh..around also.”

“Yeah? Well good, because good luck getting rid of our asses,” Richie said. Bill snorted.

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Eddie had been smart. He always knew when flu season was just around the corner. In fact, he always had it marked down on his calendar just so that he couldn’t forget. A week prior he had gone to get a flu shot and the day after that he got more hand sanitizer and antiseptic wipes. The flu wasn’t going to catch up with him this season just like it was never able to all those seasons before.

It seemed his roommates weren’t as dynamic in their effort of staying well. Though in reality, none of them could care enough to even

notice despite Eddie's several warnings.

And so, when Stan got the flu, Eddie knew the signs instantly.

"Yu..you'd think he w..wu..was zombie or s..something they way he's got Stan qu..qu..quarant..tined," Bill said one morning to Richie as they both watched Eddie, clad in gloves and a surgical mask, go over the importance of vitamin-C with Stan. "L..Like he's i..infected or s..su..something."

"Don't say that too loud, Bill," Richie warned him. "If you give Eddie the idea, he might actually quarantine Stan. Trust me, I don't think he's above it. Once made me sleep in the bathtub when I got poison ivy last spring. The guys fucking nuts."

"I can fucking hear you, genius," Eddie said, looking over at his boyfriend and Bill briefly before turning back towards Stan. Eddie wasted no time getting Stan a surgical mask of his own and eagerly gestured for him to put it on. Stan didn't argue as he appreciated a sterile environment almost as much as Eddie did.

"The flu is practically endemic to large populations of students and the season isn't going to even be over until the end of May, so unless you guys want to be in bed when you should be taking finals then you should take my god damn advice," Eddie continued. "I'm not getting sick because of you assholes."

"Fuck, getting out of finals sounds almost worth it," Richie sneered.

"If you get sick then you're back in the fucking bathtub," Eddie promised.

A week later, Bill and Richie got sick as well.

Eddie opted to stay in a hotel.

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It wasn't until they had walked into the apartment and heard the undeniable sound of vomiting did Eddie and Richie know something was up. It wasn't until they peered down the small hallway and into the restroom to see Stan sitting on the side of the bathtub, running his fingers through Bill's hair as he was hunched over the toilet and

emptying the content of his stomach into it did Richie remember what day it was.

Richie couldn't help but feel guilty. Several years ago to the date was when Bill's little brother had gone missing. No one knew what happened and a body was never found, but it was an event that changed Bill forever.

Richie couldn't believe he had forgotten, but Bill didn't forget. He couldn't forget.

Stan looked up at him, his form tense and defensive though he hadn't stopped soothing Bill who was still throwing up in intervals. Though now it seemed to only be bile at this point.

Richie didn't have a chance to ask how Bill was. The smell of liquor and vomit was a good enough answer to that question. Stan had shook his head slightly towards them all the same.

"I'll go get some water," Eddie said already slipping into nurse mode.

"N..no," Bill said sharply, resting his chin against the toilet seat, which made Eddie's stomach turn. He turned his head toward Richie and Eddie. Bill's eyes were red. He had been crying. "I..I'm not ready to be sober. Not yu..yet."

Eddie didn't understand, but he didn't say anything. Just gave Bill a nod.

Later that evening when Bill and Stan had gone off to their own room and presumably to bed, Richie told Eddie about Georgie.

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"You're going back all summer?" Stan asked Eddie one evening. The semester had ended a week prior and all four of them couldn't be more relieved. Now if only they could survive one more term they would be done.

"Yeah, my mom really misses me while I'm gone. I'm kind of all she has," Eddie explained with a shrug. They didn't have a dishwasher, which meant each night everyone took turns cleaning the dishes.

Soon, Eddie and Stan had realized that if they joined forces the washing took half as much time. Besides, Stan always made sure the plates were perfectly clean, and Eddie had always made sure there were no spots left on any of the dishes much to both of their liking.

Tonight was one of the nights they did the dishes.

"It keeps the beast under control so that she isn't calling me every hour of everyday while I'm back here," Eddie joked. It was true, but Stan knew that his mother did call Eddie at least twice a day, though he didn't point that out. "Are you staying?"

"I have to work," Stan said with a small shrug, handing Eddie a wet but clean plate. "I'll going to go back for a week in July, though. I want Bill to come with me and meet my parents."

"Whoa, really?" Eddie asked, grinning at Stan. "Did he agree?"

"I, uh, haven't asked him yet," Stan said with a trace amount of guilt in his tone. "If he can get off work, he'll probably come with but I don't want to psych him out. It's not that big of a deal. Not really, at least."

"Eeeh, it's kind of a big deal," Eddie said.

"Okay, yeah, it's kind of a big deal," Stan sighed, defeated. "Are you ever going to introduce Richie to your mom?"

"Oh, she's met him," Eddie said. He raised his eyebrows and whistled as he dried the plate off before checking for any spots. "That did not go well. Lets just say she is not a fan."

"But...?" Stan asked, handing him another dish once Eddie put the plate in the drying rack.

"No buts," Eddie explained. "She is not a fan."

"But you're still with him so that must not bother you too much," Stan pointed out.

"Yeah, of course I'm still with him," Eddie said, glancing through the glass porch door where Richie and Bill were out having a

conversation over a cigarette or two. Something both Stan and Eddie weren't fond of but didn't nag about too often. "I sorta love that asshole."

Stan smiled, his own gaze following Eddie's. "Yeah, I love Bill too."

2. Chapter 2

Summary for the Chapter:

Richie helps Stan study. Eddie and Richie have a heart to heart. Bill and Eddie have a bit of an adventure. Richie gives Stan advice. Eddie and Richie pack for "vacation".

When Bill encouraged Stan to take the same science course as Richie he was skeptical. Bill's best friend, and now their mutual roommate, seemingly couldn't take anything seriously if his life depended on it. It was the last general education class Stan needed to take since he had failed his first attempt during his freshman year. And since Richie needed to take one as well, Stan could only imagine it was due to also failing.

Stan quickly found out he assumed wrong.

Richie was loud, silly, and quick to make a joke. Stan knew he could be mature when it was really crucial, but not without cracking a joke or two in the process. It wasn't until they were studying for their first biology exam that Stan realized how school oriented Richie actually was.

"Hey, hey Stan. Why are men sexier than women?" Richie asked, giving his roommate a wink from behind thick glasses. His voice was much too loud for being in the library, but that didn't stop him even as Stan gave him a warning glare.

What a weird thing to be asking now of all times.

"Because you can't spell sexy without xy, aaaaaye get it?" Richie asked before laughing at his own biology joke. Stan didn't give him the satisfaction of even rolling his eyes at that one. Instead, he just looked back down at the notes he had scribbled during that morning's lecture.

"I'm actually trying to learn, Richie," Stan scolded. He was struggling to find the answers to the questions on the practice exams they were

given. Their professor had said that if they could answer the example equations, then the test would be a breeze. The only problem was that Stan couldn't answer the question and was beginning to become increasingly frustrated with that fact. "Don't you want to pass this time?"

"This time?" Richie asked, leaning back in his chair and balancing on the back two legs which made Stan nervous he was going to fall. "What do you mean this time?"

"Haven't you taken this class before?" Stan asked. "You failed, right? That's why you're retaking it."

Richie just shook his head. "Nah, I've never taken this class. Not sure how I got away with putting it off until the last term but hey, here I am."

"Oh."

"Wait, don't tell me you failed it?" Richie said, grinning at Stan as he let his chair go forward to stand on all four of its legs. "Stan the Man didn't have a plan for this one, aye?"

"That doesn't even make sense," Stan mumbled, trying to hide his embarrassment with downward gaze. "It's a hard subject, okay?"

"Here," Richie said, taking his own practice exam out. "It's not too bad. Say, how about we go over question one?"

They studied the rest of the afternoon. Richie took it seriously as he went through each question with Stan, but not without making as many jokes as he could. It wasn't until a week later when the exams were handed back and Stan saw he had only missed two that he was glad Bill suggested taking the same science class as Richie.

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It wasn't the first time they had been woken up from their sleep by Richie and Eddie, and probably wasn't going to be the last. The two of them were naturally loud people and Richie had a tendency to say things that often set Eddie off. He didn't, after all, have much of a filter. But this time was a different.

“You’re embarrassed of me, aren’t you?” were Eddie’s words that initially tore Bill and Stan from their slumber.

It was a Saturday and no one had class thankfully. Although Bill was expected to go to work, but that wasn’t for several more hours.

“What the fuck? Babe, no I’m not embarrassed of you,” Richie had retorted defensively. Neither of them were yelling, but the walls were thin and their voices tended to naturally carry. “Why the fuck would you even think that?”

Bill raised an eyebrow at Stan who in return shrugged tiredly. Neither of them needed to know much context to the conversation to recognize the tense atmosphere that shrouded it. By this time they had become accustomed to what a typical Eddie and Richie argument sounded like, and this certainly wasn’t it.

“Ha,” Eddie laughed, though it was clearly not out of amusement. “Yeah sure and that’s why you don’t want me to meet your parents. Haven’t you even mentioned me to them? Do they even know I exist?”

“I mean, kind of?” Richie told him with a little shrug. Uncertainty was obvious in his voice. For once he didn’t know what to say. “Like, I’m pretty sure they know I’m dating someone. Or at least I think they know. They might know? I don’t really know.”

“Wow... Three years and your parents don’t even know who I am, huh?” Eddie asked. He didn’t look mad, which only made Richie more nervous. “But you’re tooootally not fucking ashamed of me or anything. It’s just that your parents don’t know who their son is dating! Do you even have parents or, or did you just form out of some fermented garbage fumes one day?”

“Hey, watch it, Shithead. Not everyone’s mom is their best friend. It’s not my fault you never asked me about them until now,” Richie spat back.

“There is nothing wrong with being friends with your mom, and I shouldn’t have to ask you about them, you should just already have told me about them by now. Don’t you think that’s a little fucking

weird that you've never mentioned them to me before?" Eddie asked.

"Not nearly as weird as introducing me to your mom after we've been dating for a month," Richie argued. "Listen, my parents and I don't really get along. We don't have a bad relationship or anything, we just don't really have one at all. If you asked them what school I go to they probably couldn't even tell you. I'm not embarrassed of you, Spaghetti Head. They don't care about me, sooo by extension they don't care much about you either. I don't know, at least we have that going for us, right?"

There was silence for a moment.

"Not being cared about kind of sucks more than being hated," Eddie finally spoke up. "I'm sorry, Richie."

"Hey, don't worry about it, Eds," Richie said. "You know Bill, don't you? He's the only family of mine that's worth meeting."

Bill couldn't help but smile at that.

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"Don't you dare drop me." Eddie demanded.

"I..I'm not going to d..du..drop you," Bill said. His arms were firmly wrapped around Eddie's legs as he had the smaller man hoisted up to try and reach the edge of their balcony. Him and Richie always forgot to lock it after their morning rituals of coffee and a cigarette. It had to still be open.

Stan was at work and much to Eddie and Bill's dismay, Richie was nowhere to be found. It was a hectic morning. The time had changed and every single one of them forgot to set their clocks back. This resulted in inevitably being late for class as they rushed out the door.

It would have been one thing if Bill had been the only one to forget his keys in the morning panic, but once he got back to the complex and saw Eddie sitting on the porch he realized he wasn't alone. Bill had originally counted on Eddie being home before he was per usual, but now the two of them had to wait until either Richie showed up or for when Stan got off work around eight that night.

Lucky for Eddie, sitting and waiting wasn't Bill's style. Which was how he ended up being held by Bill as he tried desperately to pull himself up onto the balcony. The only thing was that Bill couldn't seem to get even footing and was swaying back and forth.

"You're going to drop me, you're going to drop me, you're going to drop me," Eddie said in the form of an anxious chant. He bent over to grab onto Bill's head when Bill had made a particularly sharp change in his stance as if that was going to protect him from falling. In reality, doing so had only made things worse.

"I..I'm not-- Eddie, I cu..can't see," Bill warned. If his stance wasn't unstable before, it definitely was now that Eddie's was grabbing at his head. Eddie's undistributed weight caused Bill to lean backwards and Bill tried to counteract this by stepping back and further away from the balcony.

Eddie shrieked as the two toppled over onto the wet grass, only barely missing the concrete surrounding their complex by a few inches. It took a moment for them to realize that had happened, but once they had Eddie was brandishing a spiteful frown in Bill's direction. Bill on the other hand laughed at their foolishness.

"Uuuh. What the actual fuck?" Richie asked from his vantage point a few feet away.

Neither Eddie nor Bill knew when he had showed up, but based on his very descriptive retelling of the event to Stan that evening the two could only assume he had seen the whole thing.

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"C..cu..class was c..ca..cancelled, so a c..cu..couple of us are g..going to the l..library inst..s..stead," Bill told Stan. Though due to Eddie and Richie's proximity to his boyfriend, them as well.

Bill was clutching onto his backpack as if he was afraid it was going to leap off him. His mouth had formed a bit of a pouty lip. The sort that Stan had come to learn meant he was upset. Or that there was something on Bill's mind. Or more often than not, both. Stan just nodded.

“Kay, have fun. Am I going to see you before work?” Stan asked. He had noticed that Bill had been acting strange for a couple of days now. It wasn’t like Bill to be so standoffish, but Stan couldn’t figure out the right way to approach the subject. He didn’t want to come across as overbearing, which had been something Bill complained about in the past.

“I..It’s the f..fu..first major p..pu..paper of the y..yu..year. I r..really need to mu..mu..make..make sure it’s p..perfect,” Bill explained. In other words, no Stan wouldn’t be seeing him before work. “B..but I’ll see you a..a..af..fter.”

Stan just gave Bill a silent nod, which he returned before leaving. Stan’s eyes lingered on the door perhaps a bit longer than necessary.

“He’s not cheating on you, you know,” Richie told him, pulling Stan’s attention from the door and to him. Richie was lounging on the couch running his fingers absentmindedly through Eddie’s hair, who was beside him with his attention was on a gameboy. “He would’ve told me if he was.”

“I didn’t say...” Stan began, though his words trailed up.

“Didn’t have to, Stanny,” Richie told him. “Could tell by your face. He’s not cheating on you, he’s just bored of you.”

“Damn, Richie, below the belt much?” Stan accused. His brows knitted together defensively. Eddie snorted a disinterested laugh as he was only half paying attention to the interaction unfolding around him.

“Okay, fine, maybe not the best word choice,” Richie rewinded. “I mean to say he’s bored of your guy’s sex life. Not bored of you per say.”

“He, he told you that?” Stan asked. He couldn’t help but flush a bit. It wasn’t the prospect of sex that embarrassed him. It was the fact *Richie* knew about his intimate life. Unlike Richie and Eddie, though arguably more Richie, he and Bill weren’t so open about what they did together. Or at least that was what Stan thought.

“Sounds like something a friend tells you in confidentiality,” Eddie commented.

“He told *me* of all people,” Richie pointed out. “That sort of comes with a disclaimer that it might maybe possibly somehow slip out one day.”

Eddie couldn’t argue with that logic. “How many of *my* secrets do you tell people, exactly?” Eddie asked skeptically.

“Not a single word, babe,” Richie said. Eddie side eyed him suspiciously but in the end decided to let it go in favor of his game.

“Wait, but he actually said that?” Stan asked, bringing the conversation back to him.

“Bill’s an adventurous kind of guy. And you’re... Well, I don’t actually know. He wouldn’t share details, and trust me, I tried. You have a loyal son of a bitch,” Richie said. “Buuut, I know you Stan, and you’re kind of the exact opposite? Probably pretty vanilla in the sack, huh?”

“I’m not talking about this with you,” Stan huffed.

“You’re the one asking questions,” he said. “I’m just trying to help you out, dude. Consider me to be, like, a medium for Bill’s libido. Bridging the gap between our world and the unknown. Try being more spontaneous.”

Stan didn’t reply, but the next morning, in yet another confidential friend conversation over shitty black coffee on the balcony, Bill describe to Richie what he called “the most uncharacteristically mind blowing sex” he had ever had. Not with much detail, however.

Bill had a stupid grin for what felt like days and Richie kept this mouth shut on his involvement.

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“I fucking hate this,” Richie complained. “I want you to know that I really, really fucking hate this.”

“Tough tits, dipshit. Trust me, my mom would prefer you weren’t going either,” Eddie told him. He was standing at the edge of their bed, folding, sorting, and packing their clothes into suitcases. “But if you think I’m going to be caught dead at my aunt’s wedding alone you’re out of your fucking mind.”

“Wish I was out of my fucking mind, might actually make this thing bearable,” Richie complained again. He hadn’t budged from the spot he had woken up in. Even as Eddie had gotten up, showered, dressed, and began packing Richie made an adamant effort not to move. They had a flight to catch in an hour back to Eddie’s home town. “I thought your aunt was already married.”

“That’s my other aunt. This ones different. This is her fourth wedding,” Eddie informed him. The sound of a zipper indicated he was done packing one of their suitcases. “Get the fuck up, Trashmouth, or we’re going to miss our flight.”

“We live like fifteen minutes from the airport, relax,” Richie said, though he did slowly bring himself to a sitting position. “Is there going to be an open bar?”

“You think my family can stand each other for more than six seconds without there being alcohol involved?” Eddie asked him. Richie shrugged.

Richie hadn’t met Eddie’s whole family. Only his mother and that encounter had left a lot to be desired. A whole lot. Though Richie insisted that the encounter would have been doomed from the start even without the little altercation that ended it. Eddie’s mother did not like Richie one bit. Eddie had to reassure Richie that it wasn’t personal, and that no amount of effort was going to change his overbearing mother’s mind.

“I can think of a thousand and ten different ways I would rather be spending spring break that didn’t involve your mom looking at me like she wants to fucking disembowel me,” Richie said, sliding out of bed and into a clean pair of sweatpants.

“Just keep the wisecrack to a minimum and you’ll be fine,” Eddie told him, folding up one of Richie’s shirts and placing it into the

suitcase.

“But my wisecrack is all part of my charm,” Richie said. His arms wrapped around Eddie’s waist as Richie pulled Eddie’s back flush to his chest in a hug. Richie rested his chin against Eddie’s shoulder, watching his boyfriend’s hands move as they folded each article of clothing perfectly and placed them neatly into the bag.

“Expect it’s not charming,” Eddie said.

“It’s pretty charming,” Richie disagreed. “I bet your mom finds it real charming.”

“Yeah, no, I highly doubt that,” Eddie said. He was about to say something more when there was a soft knock on the door.

“A..are yu..you g..gu..guy..guys r..r...” it was Bill’s voice.

“Are you guys ready to go?” Stan asked, recognizing Bill was struggling. “You’ll miss your flight and Bill and I have places to be too, you know. So if you still want that ride, how about you wrap it up.”

“Yeah, we’re coming,” Eddie said, shoving the remainder of Richie’s clothes into the suitcase and closing it. He turned in Richie’s arms to face his boyfriend. Richie must’ve know Eddie was about to lecture him, or nag him, or what have you so Richie took the opportunity away with a kiss.

“You st..mmm,” Eddie’s words died away into the kiss. It was a short lived victory for Richie, however. “You still need to put on deodorant if I’m going to be sitting on a plane with you for five hours and don’t you dare pull that shit again without brushing your teeth.”

“Guys, our check in is at three, hurry it up,” Stan called from the living room. He and Bill stood by their own suitcases.

“We’re coming!” Eddie said, shoving Richie away and picking up their bags.

For the next week and a half the apartment was empty.

3. Chapter 3

Summary for the Chapter:

Bill reads to Stan. Eddie and Richie take a bath. The boys visit Stan at work. Eddie and Richie do laundry. Bill wants to visit Derry. The boys visit Georgie's grave.

Notes for the Chapter:

Each drabble is a different day. I wanted to point that out because the fact it is raining comes up a couple of times and makes the timeline a little confusing, imo

Stan wasn't sure when it had become a ritual of their's, but it was easily one of his favorites.

Bill was a good writer. A fantastic one at that. Stan was pretty sure he was going to win awards or become famous one day from his work. Though every time he told Bill so Bill would just chuckle and shake his head. So modest Bill was.

Even though Stan couldn't quite recall when it had all started, Bill remembered in vivid detail. It was during the first couple of weeks they were dating when Stan had seen one of Bill's short stories for his creative writing class. Bill had offered it to Stan for him to read but then Stan had requested Bill read it to him. The dread that came with Stan's request had been crippling. It was the sort of anxiety that only came with years of bullying and being called 'Stuttering Bill' by his classmates.

But Stan's eyes were kind and comforting, as his voice was sweet and encouraging.

The first time Bill read to him, he stuttered so badly he couldn't form complete sentences. Stan was patient and didn't interrupt him.

Bill didn't stutter quite as badly these days when he read to Stan,

though he did choke up now and again. It was become like clockwork at this time. Bill would finish a piece, he would tell Stan about it, they would spend an evening together where Bill read it out loud to him. More often than not it was before Bill turned the story in (provided it was a piece for school and not pleasure) and Stan would point out if something didn't make sense or if a sentence was awkward. It was like an editing session with Bill's favorite person.

This evening was one of those times. It was so cloudy and dreary outside that Stan figured it would probably rain soon. Eddie and Richie weren't home and so the apartment was quiet.

Bill was sitting on their bed, his back up against the wall with paper in hand. Stan was laying down, his head in Bill's lap with his eyes closed as if he were falling asleep, but Stan was listening. Listening to each word Bill read, each word he wrote, each word he stuttered over. With his freehand, Bill ran his fingers through Stan's unruly curls, that he still seemed to manage to keep some sort of order to.

Like Stan had predicted, it began to rain. The soft sound of raindrops hitting the window mixed with the soothing sound of his partner's voice pacified him. It didn't even bother him that Bill tended to gravitate towards the horror genre of writing and that this story was a product of his fascination. It just added to the charm. Yet another layer of the many that made Bill who he was. Each of with Stan felt he fell in love with more and more each day.

"I liked it," Stan murmured once Bill's reading came to an end. He was still fully aware and awake, but his body lay limp in Bill's lap. "I liked the part about the bloody handprint."

"You d..du..don't think it was t..too tropey?" Bill asked. Stan shook his head sightly.

"No, no it sounded good," Stan told him. "You should read it one more time."

"A..are you sure?" Bill asked.

"Yeah," Stan said. His eyes were still closed. "Keep playing with my hair, too."

Eddie preferred the term 'petite'. Being called a small man made him feel inferior. Though, at the end of the day he was a small man, but being so had its advantages. Such as fitting in a bathtub with your boyfriend. If Bill and Stan had tried to pull something like that off, Eddie was fairly certain that they wouldn't be able to and end up injuring themselves in the processes. Not that Eddie wanted to think about Bill and Stan in the bath.

Still, just because they could fit didn't mean that it was easy. Initially Eddie was reluctant to even give it a try. Statistically speaking, the bathroom was the most dangerous room in the house. Even more so that the kitchen that had knives and fire. Eddie didn't like his odds.

"Yeah, baby, keep telling me about bathroom statistics," was what Richie purred into his ear when Eddie was going on about how they would get injured. The tone of Richie's voice caused a shiver to go down Eddie's spine. I was enough to almost, *almost*, make Eddie forget about the possibility of getting hurt.

"This is a terrible idea," Eddie told him. But If there was a will, there was a way, and if Richie had anything it was a persistent streak that helped him get what he wanted. It didn't take much goading to get Eddie to agree.

It was, after all, a rather gloomy rainy day and the promise of being in a warm bath was hard to turn down. Being wrapped in warm arms was a bonus. And so, after an episode that Eddie could only compare to a weird version of bathroom twister, he and Richie were in the bathtub.

Richie's head was leaning back and resting against the shower wall, Eddie sitting in front of his, back leaning against Richie's chest. Eddie could only assume Richie was allergic to quiet situations, though, because the sound of Richie's hums mixed with the sounds of rain hitting the roof above them echoed softly against the bathroom tile. Eddie didn't complain or recite anymore CDC facts on the bathroom.

They stayed sat in the tub for a long time, and neither of them sustain a single injury doing so.

“What are you guys doing here?” Stan asked once the three of them were seated at a table. It wasn’t a table that was on Stan’s radar for that evening, but when Bill specifically requested Stan to be their server, a coworker handed them over to him.

“We didn’t want to cook tonight and Richie said we should order out and Bill said we should come in and see you,” Eddie explained, opening the menu that their hostess had left with them.

Stan worked at one of the more high end restaurants in their little college town. He always worked the evening dinner rushes, which evidently were also the shifts that paid the best. This was not a coincidence. Stan also tended to like to keep to himself which made a customer service a particularly tasking job. It was no secret in the Denbrough-Kaspbrak-Tozier-Uris household that Stan *despised* his job.

“When’re you on break, hot stuff,” Richie jokingly flirted, giving Stan a wink. Stan remained expressionless as Richie made a fool of himself while Bill rolled his eyes at his best friend’s antics.

“Keep it in your pants, jackass. You’re not supposed to harass the wait staff,” Eddie told him.

“You just missed it,” Stan told them. “I have a fifteen in an hour but do you see how busy it is in here? I’ll probably have to skip it. You should’ve called, I would’ve brought home food.”

“I w..wu..wanted to see y..you,” Bill said, giving a Stan a little smile that Stan couldn’t help but return. Richie gave Eddie a look, who shook his head in mild disbelief. It wasn’t like Stan wasn’t due to be home in two hours or anything.

“Well you aren’t going to be seeing much of me. Want me to bring some waters? Beers?” Stan asked.

“The beers on the house?” Richie asked.

“Yeah, if you want me to lose my job, Richie,” Stan said.

“You’d thank me if I got you fired,” Richie insisted.

“I’d hate you if you got me fired,” Stan corrected. “I’ll bring you some beers. You better tip me well.”

The biggest mistake they had arguably ever made was finding an apartment that didn’t have a laundry room in it. It wasn’t the world’s biggest deal, they recognized, but there was something oddly miserable about hauling your dirty clothes down the stairs, to the laundromat, and sitting around until it was finished so no one took something of yours.

Richie, however, always seemed to be able to make it interesting.

He was sitting on a dryer as his and Eddie’s laundry dried beneath him. He was making an array of different sounds that reverberated with the vibration of the machine. Eddie sat across from him in the designated seating area for the patrons. He was giving Richie a disapproving look that Richie only grinned in return about.

“Come oooooon, Eeeeeeddieeee,” Richie said, every other letter being drawn out. “Come siiiiiit with me, Eeeeeeddieeeee.”

“No, you sound fucking creepy. I don’t want to get anywhere near you,” Eddie said.

Richie laughed and held his arms out in front of him expectantly. “Come siiiiiit with me, Eeeeeeddieeee.”

“God, I hate you so much,” Eddie said, standing up. The few other people that were in the laundry room were beginning to give him and Richie weird looks and Eddie was going to do whatever he could to get Richie to shut up. He reluctantly went over to his boyfriend and laced his fingers with Richie’s. “Can you get down please, you’re going to get us kicked out *again*.”

“I’m nooot going to get uuus kicked out,” Richie insisted, giving Eddie’s hand a little squeeze before pulling him closer and into a hug. Eddie couldn’t look more unamused as his boyfriend’s body vibrated next to him, but Eddie didn’t refuse the hug all the same. At least

Richie wasn't making ridiculous noises anymore and the other laundry-doers were no longer looking at them like they were crazy.

Somehow Eddie was able to put up with the odd circumstance until the dryer cycle ended approximately ten minutes later. When Richie hopped down from his seat atop the machine, he struggled a bit to stand since his body had gotten use to the movement of the dryer at that point.

"Let's hurry up and get these folded. I don't want to get caught in the rain," Eddie said, moving the clean laundry from the dryer into their basket and pushing it towards an open counter. By this time the laundromat was empty save from them. Per usual, Eddie ended up being the one doing the folding as Richie continued to talk his ear off.

"Hey, you know how you said you wanted to go to California once you graduated?" Eddie asked, interrupting one of Richie's many anecdotes that only Richie found himself to be amusing.

"Huh? Um, yeah," Richie said, though it sounded more like a question than a response. It had been several weeks since spring break when Richie had vaguely mentioned wanting to move out west after graduation, which wasn't for another several months. Like Bill, he had enrolled on an odd semester, which meant he wouldn't be walking until December anyway.

"I want to come with you," Eddie told him.

"You do?" Richie asked. He wasn't sure if he had always assumed that was going to be the plan or what they had in mind for their future together. Richie hadn't put much thought into it if he was being honest. There was always the chance that Eddie had entirely different plans for himself, whether that be moving back to his hometown or somewhere entirely different that didn't involve him. Breaching the subject was something that Richie was too nervous to do.

"Yeah. Where's a better place to be an entrepreneur than Los Angeles, anyway?" Eddie said with a shrug. He turned around to lean against the counter, looking up at Richie expectantly. As if he needed his

plan to be validated. As if he needed Richie's permission to go with him.

"Yeah, Eddie, I mean, obviously. Obviously I want you to come," he said. "I wouldn't want you anywhere else. I don't know what I'd actually do with myself if I didn't have you to deal with."

"Uh excuse me?" Eddie asked offended. "*I'm* the one who deals with *you*."

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With a satisfied gasp, Stan's hands slipped from the wall that was supporting him and he rolled over off Bill to lay beside him. Both his and Bill's chest rose and fell as they caught their breath. The sound of their heavy breathing and the patters of rain drops outside being the only thing cutting the silence that fell comfortably around them.

Once he was present enough, Stan rolled onto his side to splay his hand flat against Bill's chest. He could feel his boyfriend's heart beating beneath his warm skin. So warm that it made the contrasting cold air around them particularly biting.

"I'm gu-going back to D..Da..Derry next week," Bill told him.

"Huh?" Stan asked. He was bit more groggy than he would have liked to be. Stan knew that Bill hadn't been back to his home town since he had gone off to college. It seemed that whenever Stan had brought it up in the past, Bill would find a way to diverge away from talking about Derry. He knew that it was a combinations between difficult memories and difficult emotions that made the topic one of Bill's least favorite.

Stan had learned not to bring up Derry, or Bill's parents, or Georgie unless Bill was the one to instigate it.

This was one of those rare moments that he had, and at a particularly bizarre time as well. But Stan knew intimacy of any sort tended to make Bill vulnerable, and more often than not sex was the most intimate and vulnerable a person could be, so he Stan didn't find it weird. Instead he just listened and gave Bill the opportunity to be

heard.

“I..I w..w..want to g..go see Gu..Gu..Georgie,” Bill explained. He wasn’t looking at Stan. He wasn’t looking at anything in particular at all. His gaze was aimed forward towards the ceiling, but it was clear to Stan that Bill was lost in his thoughts. “I wu..w..want t..t..to go see him on hu..h..his birthday.”

Stan could only assume that next week was Georgie’s birthday which would explain the unusual timing for an impromptu trip back to Derry. The anniversary of Georgie’s disappearance was something that was often on Stan’s radar. Though while he could often forget about the date, he also knew the little signs in Bill’s demeanor that alerted Stan to the time of year it was. The anniversary was not the next week.

“Do you...” Stan trailed off in a pause, unsure if it was his place or not. He felt as though he was traversing uncharted waters. Soon he decided to continue. “Do you want me to come with you?”

“You d..du..don’t have to,” Bill told him.

“I want to,” Stan promptly said. “I want to meet Georgie.”

Stan could see the way Bill swallowed down his emotions with a gulp. Bill didn’t say anything, he just nodded and pulled Stan closer to him.

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Based off the two trips Eddie had taken with Richie in the past where his boyfriend could not stop talking to save his life, Eddie knew that his silence was unusual. So unusual that given any other day where Eddie might have prayed that Richie would shut up, his current state of quiet only made Eddie anxious.

A couple of days ago Bill had gone to Richie and told him something about going back to Derry for a few days. Richie had seemed bemused by the idea if not entirely taken aback. Eddie didn’t know the exact specifics of their conversation that led to Richie wanting to go with at the time, but later he found out that it had something to

do with Bill's little brother. The same little brother that Eddie knew very little about. Bill never spoke of him, Stan never mentioned anything about it, and Richie only informed Eddie on the minor details.

Going back to Derry was a big deal. Something that became apparent to Eddie that night before Richie, Bill, and apparently also Stan were suppose to leave. Richie was doing his own packing (which was much different from the past) and drawing out each movement that would have gotten him closer to being finished. When Eddie offered to help was when Richie ended up breaking down. He had practically begged Eddie to come go with him. Though if anyone were to later ask Richie if that was true, he would adamantly deny such claims.

Trash-talking, loud mouth, confident Richie had never looked quite so small. Eddie couldn't say no, and so Eddie said yes.

There was something about Derry that shook both Richie and Bill to their core that Eddie wasn't able to explain. That is, until they had actually drove into the town and Eddie was hit with an overwhelming sensation of uneasiness.

The town was like any other. In fact, it was rather similar to the one Eddie had grown up in as well. Eddie's childhood town has a quarry of it's own, and somewhere similar to what Richie and Bill described to be 'the barrens'. Eddie's childhood town also had a creepy house on the other side of town. And yet, despite all the similarities, Derry was still different. It was as if a dark atmosphere shrouded the town and Eddie was beginning to understand why Richie had never wanted to bring him back home.

Bill had always refused to visit Georgie's grave. No one had ever found his little brother's body therefore there was nothing to put inside the empty plot. As far as anyone knew, Georgie was still as alive. Or at least as far as Bill was concerned, Georgie was still alive. But while Bill was a dreamer, he knew how to be a realist. He knew the statistics. He knew that even if somehow Georgie was alive he would never see his little brother again.

The grave, body or no body, was the closet thing Bill was going ever to have to Georgie again.

He stood in front of the tombstone. The sight of it was foreign even though the name carved into the stone was also carved forever in his memory.

Richie was the one who stood closest to Bill. He had known Georgie too. He had never been close to the little boy and most of the memories he had of Georgie were fleeting at best. But he could remember snapshots of the boy and he could remember the summer he had spent with Bill traversing the sewers in search of the boy's body. He remembered how the majority of their time off was spent that way. Bill had become more and more creative in where he had wanted to look while Richie had become more and more drained by the whole experience. It was a lot to put on a kid, but Richie's resentment had died a long time ago.

He didn't know how the search for Georgie had ended, Richie just recalled that one day they had stopped looking.

"H..Hi G..Gu..Georgie," Bill spoke in the direction of headstone. His hands were almost as shaky as his voice. Stan approached Bill, gently taking his boyfriend's hands into his own. "H..Happy B..Bu...Birth..Birthday."

Eddie and Stan didn't need to know Georgie, or understand Bill's pain. They didn't need to know about the hours spent trying to find the boy. The family that was broken up from the tragedy. They didn't need to comprehend the eerie town that was Derry. Because right then they all weren't just roommates, or the boyfriend of the best friend. Right then, as they stood upon the grave of a missing boy that neither of them had met, the four of them were something more than that.

They were friends.

They were a family.

Notes for the Chapter:

I'm going to write a oneshot spin off of the time Eddie and Richie went to Eddie's aunt's wedding so yeah look forward to seeing that???

4. Chapter 4

Summary for the Chapter:

Bill brings home a stray. Eddie and Stan decide to stay. Bill and Richie have a late night chat. Stan can't say no to Bill's pout. Richie and Eddie have the apartment to themselves. Bill and Eddie take a late night trip to the store.

Notes for the Chapter:

Things get a bit heated in one drabble kind of??

"Eddie's going to fucking hate this," Richie told Bill, unlocking and stepping into their apartment one particularly dark and storming night. Neither Eddie nor Stan were home. "Like, *really* hate this."

"W..we couldn't j..ju..just leave him," Bill explained, flipping the light switch on and shedding his soaked coat onto the floor by the front door. Richie was close to follow. They had been walking home after a later than usual night at the library when Bill had spotted something scurrying from beneath one car to another in the parking lot. With a bit of further investigation, Bill had realized it was a cat.

"I'm not saying you didn't do the right thing," Richie said, giving the cat Bill was holding a once over now that they were in suitable light. It was a scrawny thing, but it didn't look unhealthy. "I'm just saying that Eddie's going to flip his shit when he gets home. Bet you've never seen anyone call animal control as fast as he's going to."

They weren't allowed to have pets in their complex. It was one of the first rules Bill and Stan had learned when they moved in and one of the first rules they had told Richie and Eddie when they moved in months later. Eddie wasn't a stickler for rules necessarily, but Richie couldn't image that his boyfriend was going to be thrilled with Bill's find.

"Hell, Stan's probably not going to be too excited either, huh?" Richie asked. Stan on the other hand *was* a stickler for rules.

"I..It was s..s..scared," Bill explained, grabbing a towel from the small closet in their narrow hallway. Judging by how statue still the cat was in his friend's arms, Richie could only assume that the animal was probably still pretty scared. "I..If i..it was me, I w..wu..would have wanted s..some..someone to save me."

"Yeah, I'd be scared if your ass was cashing coming after me too. You don't have to justify yourself. I'm with you here, not against you. I helped you catch the thing, didn't I?" Richie had pointed out. It was an endeavor that had taken them the better part of an hour. By the time they finally caught the cat, both Richie and Bill looked almost as much like a drowned rat as the cat did.

"B..Barely," Bill pointed out as he gently rubbed the water out of the cat's fur.

When Eddie had finally gotten home it was about an hour later, Richie found that his prediction on how his boyfriend would react was fairly accurate. When Stan had gotten home even later that night, he wasn't too fond about their new house guest either. By that time, though, Bill had settled the cat down and was spitballing name ideas with Richie. Eddie and Stan had both been rather persistent on the cat not staying, but soon enough Bill and Richie christened the cat He-Man.

At least for now it seemed that they had a cat.

Or rather contraband, according to Stan.

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"Is your work hiring?" Eddie asked Stan one morning as they walked to the bus stop. Campus was hardly a far walk away, but by now the region was far into the rainiest part of the season and Eddie didn't want to have to replace yet more textbooks due to having a soaked backpack.

"Are you looking for a job?" Stan asked, raising an eyebrow in question as he looked down at the smaller man. Eddie shrugged, dislodging a few raindrops from where they sat comfortably on his shoulder, resulting in them sliding down his raincoat. "You'd hate

working at The Brio. Isn't your mom paying for everything?"

Eddie was the only one of the four that didn't have to work a job on the side to make ends meet. Even though she disapproved of her son having moved so far away, Eddie's mother was very steadfast that Eddie had all of his needs met. This meant his expenses were covered with often a bit of extra cash on the side. Eddie once casually told Stan that the extra funds were to fill prescriptions, but that he used it as spending money instead. Stan decided he didn't want to know.

"I know, but I'm done in May and I don't think my mom is going to continue to pay for me to stay here if I'm not going to school. Pretty sure she thinks I'm going to be moving back," Eddie told him. "So I need to find a job. Besides, I'm going to be bored out of my fucking mind this fall if I'm not doing something."

"Are you sticking around until Richie graduates?" Stan asked, peering down the road to see if the bus was anywhere in sight before checking his watch for the time.

"Yeah, I'm going to move to California with him next spring," Eddie said. Stan's eyebrows raised. As far as Stan knew, this was a new installment. "Are you going to wait for Bill?"

Stan nodded.

Unlike Richie and Bill, Eddie and Stan had enrolled officially during an even semester. This meant that they had begun college straight out of high school while Bill and Richie had taken a semester off. Doing what exactly, Eddie and Stan still weren't entirely sure. This also meant that they were officially graduating and walking a semester sooner than their significant others. It had *also* meant that should they have decided to stay until Bill and Richie graduated (which they did), Stan and Eddie would be alumni for a summer and semester.

"Like I said you'd hate working at The Brio," Stan repeated. "But Bill might be able to get you a job at the bookstore?"

Eddie hadn't thought of that.

“Yeah,” he agreed. “That does sound a lot better.”

After what felt like hours of tossing and turning, Bill finally gave in to the fact that tonight he was not going to be getting any sleep. Even as Stan rested peacefully beside him, Bill seemed to be unable to get comfortable. He was antsy, but he wasn't entirely sure why.

Pulling himself out of bed carefully as to not stir Stan, Bill made his way out of the room and to the living room where He-Man was sleeping peacefully on the couch. From his coat pocket hung up by the front door, Bill had grabbed his pack of cigarettes. He turned and could see that the balcony light was on indicating someone was out there. Bill didn't mind, he figured he could use the company anyway. And so he went out to investigate.

It had finally stopped raining after what felt like days of endless showers and Richie had found himself sitting outside enjoying the night. He had a textbook open on the table in front of him, though Bill could see that his friend wasn't reading from it. The sound of the patio door opening alerted Richie to his presence, and he turned to look over at his friend.

“C..Couldn't s..sleep,” Bill explained before Richie had a chance to ask. He sat down on the empty chair adjacent to Richie and took out a cigarette before offering one to Richie who obliged. “N..Not feeling ru..right.”

“You're not getting sick are you?” Richie asked before making a face. “God damn, I'm starting to sound like Eddie, aren't I?”

Bill laughed. “K..k..kind of lu..ook like him too.”

“Fuck you, take that back,” Richie said, but his words held no actual offense. “You okay?”

“Y..yeah, I'm f..fu..fine” Bill agreed, lighting his cigarette before reaching over to light Richie's for him.

“Pretty girls don't light there own cigarettes,” Richie joked. It was something he began saying when the both of them took up smoking

their first semester. It started as a social means since it had given them an excuse to hang around the designated smoking area for the other students in their dorm building but turned into something that stuck. They were addictive, after all. Stan often scolded Bill for it, but he also mentioned a few times that it made him look like a cliché writer whenever he did. This wasn't something Bill disliked.

"C..couldn't sleep?" Bill asked him.

"Cramming," Richie corrected, gesturing to the forgotten book in front of him. It read *'Advanced Reporting: Essential Skills for Contemporary Journalism'* which was fitting since Richie was studying broadcast journalism after all. He wanted to be a radio personality for as long as Bill could remember. "Well, I was cramming. I think if I have to read one more thing about the ethics of telecom I think my fucking brain will fry."

"Y..you have a b..b..brain?" Bill asked with a self-satisfied grin.

"Fuck right off why don't you," Richie said before inhaling from his cigarette.

"Y..You'll do f..fu..fine," Bill reassured him.

"No shit Sherlock, I practically wrote this book," Richie teased good-naturedly.

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"When a..are your p..p..parents c..coming down uh..uh..again?" Bill yelled to Stan from their bedroom, who was brushing his teeth in the shared bathroom around the corner.

Stan made a confused look at himself in the mirror before leaning forward to spit into the sink. "My parents are coming?" he asked, still confused by his boyfriend's words. "I didn't know that they were."

"For gra..graduation, I m..m..mean," Bill clarified. He held two shirts out in front of him before deciding to go with a red one. He pulled it on and picked up his belt before exiting their bedroom to lean against the bathroom doorframe.

“Shit, Bill, that’s not for another two months,” Stan told him while rinsing off his tooth brush and neatly putting it up. He grabbed his comb to make an attempt at bringing some order to his wild curls. It wasn’t an easy task, but Stan always seemed to pull it off. Though Bill had expressed more than once how much he liked how Stan looked with his bed head. “I don’t even want to think about that yet.”

“T..Two months i..isn’t a long time,” Bill pointed out. His eyes shifted down for a moment when he felt something brush up against his leg. It was his and Richie’s cat. Only his and Richie’s since Stan and Eddie refused to take any part of their, as Stan called it, ‘illegal endeavors’. Bill turned his attention back to Stan.

“Yeah, I know. That’s why I don’t want to think about it yet. I need to focus on, I don’t know, anything else. I guess,” Stan explained.

“W..w..we should plan s..something to do w..when they visit,” Bill said. “Oth..other than the c..ceremony, I mu..mean.”

“Bill,” Stan sighed.

When Stan had come out to his parents, they weren’t necessarily thrilled. They weren’t upset either. For the most part, Mr and Mrs Uris were fearful. The sort of fearful caring parents were for their child’s wellbeing when you didn’t live in the most openminded community such as the one Stan had grown up in. They hadn’t wanted to water down who their child was, but Stan could vividly recall how they encouraged Stan to not be so open about this part of himself. It had initially hurt, but in retrospect Stan understood why his parents had done what they did, even if he didn’t agree.

Bill wasn’t exactly the sweet Jewish girl they had envisioned their Stanley with. Bill must’ve sensed this when he had went home with Stan for a week last summer and met them for the first time as the level of anxiety he was experiencing had Bill on edge the first two days of their visit. He had kept quiet most of that time simply because his speech impediment would hardly allow him to talk.

Stan’s parents were warm and welcoming, and almost instantly Mr and Mrs Uris warmed up to Bill. Soon Bill had warmed up to them as well and was much more outspoken and far less standoffish. The

remainder of that week ended up being rather enjoyable. It didn't take long for Mrs Uris to always ask about Bill whenever her and Stan talked on the phone.

"W..w..we should b..bri..bring them to the state pa..pa..park," Bill suggested.

"Bill," Stan repeated, giving his boyfriend an exasperated look. "Two months. We have two months to figure this out. Besides, they're only staying for the ceremony. They'll probably go home afterwards, or at least not stay that long. Let's just have a nice, simple, easy dinner and not make a huge deal out of it."

"Y..You're g..graduating, though, Stan," Bill pointed out. "Th..that's is a b..big deal."

"Well, yeah I know, but not really," Stan said.

Bill rested his head against the doorframe and looked at Stan. Stan hadn't been facing Bill in return, but once he realized that his boyfriend wasn't arguing his point anymore, Stan became curious enough to look over. Stan had an inkling that he hadn't won but it wasn't until he was greeted by Bill's sad eyes and natural pout did Stan know he had officially lost.

Game over.

"Fuck, okay, fine," Stan gave up. "I'll call my mom about it later."

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Richie had practically stumbled over Eddie trying to get into the apartment. Once the door was closed behind them, Richie wasted no time at all pushing Eddie up against it in one of the most cliché forms of heated affection. Eddie didn't seem to mind, though, and went willingly as Richie's lips found his own in a desperate kiss.

It was one of those rare nights that neither Stan nor Bill were home. Bill had mentioned something about a dinner being put on by the Creative Writers club that he and Stan were going to attend to Richie that morning. Bill had then gone into more detail, but once Richie realized the apartment was going to be empty that night, each and

every one of Bill's words fell onto deaf ears. Richie didn't care what Bill was doing that night, Richie only cared about what Eddie was doing that night. More specifically, Richie only cared about what Eddie was doing with *him* that night.

And so, when Eddie's usually careful fingers yanked desperately at Richie's shirt, Richie didn't hesitate to discard the garment onto the floor. Although, did make a distant mental note to pick it up before Bill and Stan got home later. His skin prickled against the cold air of the empty apartment as goosebumps rose in the wake of Eddie's roaming hands. Richie was quick to pick Eddie up, silently thanking whatever higher power out there that Eddie was light and malleable, before moving him over to the couch.

With a soft 'oof' Richie sat his boyfriend down. Feeling as though Eddie was a bit too overdressed, Richie began to work to take off his shirt as well. Their kiss only broke for a moment before their mouths were together again, only to once again depart so Richie could trail kisses down Eddie's jaw, neck, shoulders, and so on.

"Wait, wait, Richie," Eddie said, much to even his own dismay as he pushed Richie back, who complied.

"What's wrong?" Richie asked, his expression mixed with genuine concern and curiosity.

"That fucking cat is watching" Eddie said.

Richie turned his head and sure enough, sitting beneath the television sat He-Man. Richie laughed merrily as he sat back and reaching for his abandoned shirt. "Come on, let's move to the bedroom," he said.

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"You're his best friend," Eddie accused.

"Y..you're his b..boyfr..friend," Bill retorted.

"You've known him all his life," Eddie pointed.

"You're his b..ba..*boyfriend*," Bill repeated, with a bit more emphasis this time.

They glared at each other as the fluorescent light of the grocery store glared down at them. It was empty in the store aside from themselves and the cashier as stores tended to be vacant when it was one in the morning. The four of them had been drinking that night in the form of the world's smallest birthday party for Richie, but they had run out of essential party supplies. I.e. beer.

Much to all of their surprise, Richie had decided he didn't want to go out for his birthday and much preferred to stay in. He made the excuse that it was cheaper that way, but later confided in Eddie that due to the semester getting more intense, they all hadn't been seeing much of each other. Either someone was in class, studying at the library, studying holed up in their room, or in Richie, Stan, and Bill's case, at work. Richie missed the four of them spending time together.

And so, with the decision being made to stay in that night, everyone had made sure they were free the next day. Pizza was order, movies were rented, video games were played, playful banters was had, and beer was purchased. When the clock struck midnight and everyone was thoroughly enjoying themselves was when they decided for another round of drinks to find they had finished them all. It was Bill and Eddie who had drawn the short straw on who got to do the next alcohol run. Luckily they lived within walking distance of a store.

"Just because I'm dating him doesn't mean I know what kind of beer he likes," Eddie said. "What were we drinking earlier?"

"I...", Bill paused, wracking his brain. It felt like it had been so long ago when in reality it had only been a couple of hours. Stan was the one who had picked up the party goods, so Bill hadn't been part of the process therefore didn't have memory of the preparatory purchases. Choosing what beer to buy was probably one of the least important decisions of his life, but Bill couldn't help but mentally kick himself for forgetting what Richie preferred to drink. They were college students after all, and beer was beer, but as Eddie had pointed out, Richie was his best friend. The alcohol in his system, though fleeting, wasn't helping. "I d..don't remember."

"Fine, whatever, we're just getting what I like then," Eddie decided, looking back at their options briefly before turning to grab a bottle of Fireball off the shelf instead.

None of them had plans for the next day, after all. This turned out to be rather important since everyone had woken up the next morning with a hangover.